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THE
CHURCHMAN

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ART. I.—THE WITNESS OF THE HISTORICAL BOOKS
TO THE ACCURACY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

PART I.

AMONG the many remarkable changes which have passed over religious thought in our time, perhaps the most remarkable is that which relates to the estimation in which the Scriptures of the elder covenant are held by persons of earnest Christian convictions. Those of us who are old enough will remember the storm of indignation which swept over the religious world in England when the celebrated volume, "Essays and Reviews," appeared some five and thirty years ago. All theological sections among us save the extreme Latitudinarian school, all religious bodies except the Unitarian, united in denouncing its contents as fatal to all belief in the inspiration of the Bible, and Bishop Thirlwall was scarcely less forcible in his repudiation of the principles set forth in that volume than Dr. Pusey and Mr. Keble, Canon McNeill and Canon Stowell. *Now*, the same views are put forth by learned Professors at both Universities, and not only is there no protest, but they are received with something akin to a sigh of relief both by disciples of Pusey and Keble and disciples of Venn and Simeon. It is useless as well as foolish to attempt to raise a cry of alarm at this most extraordinary revolution in religious feeling. It is wiser to try to account for it. The explanation is a very simple one. First of all, we are in the full current of a reaction from the Bibliolatry which has so long been dominant in the Church; and next, there is an earnest, though as a rule unexpressed, desire among the leaders of modern religious schools to come to an understanding with modern thought by *minimizing the supernatural*.

Now I desire at once to say that I do not wish to press any extreme view of the infallibility of Scripture. There is undoubtedly a human element in the Bible—possibly a large human element. And men have an undoubted right to inquire how far that element extends, and, so far as it extends, to exercise their right of criticism as freely as in the case of any other writings. The only real cause for anxiety is to be found in the fact that, as is usually the case with reactions, the pendulum is apparently swinging a good deal too far in the opposite direction, and is tending to jeopardize convictions which are absolutely essential to the belief in revealed religion. The plea of necessity for concessions, be it remembered, is by no means so weighty as it once was. The demands made by the Scripture narrative on our belief in the supernatural are a far less heavy yoke on thinking minds now than they were a few years ago. *Then*, the possibility of the miraculous was flatly denied. *Now*, scientific men are beginning to see that miracles are not incompatible with science. Romanes, after many struggles, was at length enabled to accept the Christian scheme; and even Huxley, in his "Essay on Hume," categorically repudiates the *non possumus* attitude which science at one time adopted in regard to the miraculous. Many miracles may doubtless be resolved into special providences; the belief in many more is held, even by orthodox theologians, to depend entirely upon the amount of evidence for the particular miracle in question. But it is no longer impossible for any scientific thinker to admit that the natural order may, for sufficient reasons, have been—nay, that there is not wanting considerable evidence for the theory that it actually *has been*—disturbed at various times by the interference of forces with whose laws of action we have no means of becoming acquainted.

Yet, though it may be admitted that Christians may find it necessary to modify in some respects their views in regard to inspiration, it is certainly premature, and even unreasonable, to insist that this modification must of necessity take the form of the conclusions either of recent German criticism or of that somewhat remarkable modification of it which holds the field in England at the present moment. We may doubt whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch, whether it is all the work of one author, and whether it is as old as it has until lately been generally supposed to be, without adopting the theory that, at least as far as the religious history of Israel is concerned, it is utterly incorrect as it stands; that every succeeding historical book has been largely rewritten in order to induce people to accept its statements concerning the evolution of religious thought in Israel; and that the

prophets—the preachers, that is, under the Old Covenant—were mistaken in regard to the origin of the institutions they strove so earnestly to enforce on the Jewish people. We may believe that the Jewish historians, like all other historians, used documents, and sometimes, or even frequently, inserted them bodily into their narratives. But it does not follow that we are compelled to believe Wellhausen or Kuenen, even when reinforced by a certain number of enthusiastic followers in Germany and in England, when they say to us: “These—JE, D, P—are the documents of which the history is composed.” Still less is any rational and independent thinker compelled to believe the art of criticism to have been carried to such a pitch of excellence that we can tell, even to half or a quarter of a verse, which of the various authors whose existence has been assumed—not *proved*, we must remember—has written it.¹ Scepticism on this point is still further justified when we are asked to admit that the historians of Israel, for reasons which have never been explained, constantly interrupted their selections from one author by unnecessary, unintelligible, and, as it is asserted, contradictory selections from another. In the case of a reasonable and unprejudiced person, it would naturally approach to absolute unbelief when he is told, not only that there were stages in the evolution of the Jewish law, but that we are in a position to lay our finger upon a P, P₁, P₂, . . . P_x as being themselves the actual stages of modification of Israelite institutions. One loses one’s breath a little at the preternatural sagacity of these investigators, and asks in all humility, as well as sincerity, for some support from other branches of historical and literary study for these somewhat startling processes, these absolutely infallible results.

Such methods, we do not fail to note, are not those usually adopted by our best historical scholars. Bishop Stubbs, of Oxford, no mean authority on historical points, says that in any other field of historical inquiry but that of Scripture history the canons of investigation adopted by recent Biblical critics would be “laughed out of court.”² In a controversy

¹ The publication of the “Polychrome Bible” has dealt a heavy blow to the prevalence of these theories by making their real nature plain to the uninitiated.

² “Charge,” p. 11. Professor Freeman, also, is no mean authority on questions of historical investigation. He was Professor of History at Professor Driver’s University. And this is what he says on the matter: “As for the Old Testament, I have never read any German books, but I have thought a good bit, as you may perhaps have found out. It seems to be generally dealt with by two sets of people—those who take a malicious pleasure in picking holes, and those who make it a point of honour to defend everything. You know, perhaps, that there is a class

on the orthodoxy of Justinian, carried on a short time back in the columns of the *Guardian* between two competent, if not distinguished, historical scholars—Professor Bury and Mr. W. H. Hutton—the canons of investigation agreed on by both parties are as follows: “Neither (1) arguments resting on considerations of improbability—impossibility is a different matter—nor (2) as a general rule, arguments *ex silentio*, which are, indeed, merely a particular case of (1) can be used to invalidate positive evidence which is not on independent grounds suspicious, *unless there exists some positive evidence on the other side.*”¹ Professor Driver has been asked whether he is willing to accept these canons. But though nothing can exceed his scorn for those who betray any lack of acquaintance with the utterances of German critics, he has never condescended to adopt what one might suppose to be the necessary preliminary to any treatment whatever of his subject—namely, to state what, in his opinion, are to be considered sound and safe principles of investigation of the historical question on which he has taken upon himself to write. It is obvious that an historical question can only be fairly argued on principles generally accepted by historical experts. We are therefore entitled to ask beforehand whether the inquiry into the accuracy of the Old Testament Scriptures is to be conducted according to recognised methods or according to methods specially invented for the occasion. These demands are the more necessary in that the conclusions reached by these methods require us to suppose the whole history of Israel to have been “worked over”—in other words, falsified—by later writers in order to bring it into accord with the theories of religion and worship which they had adopted, and that this falsification was accepted without question by post-exilic Israel, and handed down without question to later ages. The statements—the *unanimous* statements, be it observed—of all the Hebrew writers whose works have come down to us constitute, in the words of the canon above-mentioned, “positive evidence.” This positive evidence is not counterbalanced by any “positive evidence” on the other side. That fact, at least, is incontestable. It is met by “considerations of improbability” and “arguments *ex silentio*,” and by them

springing up who are rigid High Churchmen in dogma and ceremony, while they allow themselves no little license in Old Testament interpretation. And these don't quite please me either, because they seem to me to be trying how far they can go on one side without giving up their position on the other. *One wants somebody who would look at the thing quite fairly, and give Moses and the prophets the same prescription which we (at least I) give to Thucydides and no more.*—“Life,” ii. 406.

¹ *Guardian* for 1896, p. 362. The italics are Professor Bury's.

alone. It is true that the evidence is pronounced on "independent grounds suspicious." But when these "independent grounds" are examined, they resolve themselves into the "considerations of improbability" and the "arguments *ex silentio*" which our best historical experts declare to have no weight. Is it not time that some of our trained historical investigators devoted a little of their time to the history of the most important people of the world? It is not too much to say that there is not a single other people whose history has been metamorphosed in such a fashion as that I have described, or in which the theory that it has been so metamorphosed has stood the slightest chance of acceptance.¹

Let it at least be distinctly understood that it is possible to criticise the history of Israel with the utmost freedom, without binding ourselves to the cumbrous and artificial systems of compilation at present offered to our acceptance. When one contemplates them, one is irresistibly reminded of Charles Lamb's delicious apologue of the invention of roast pork by the Chinese, and of the brilliant discoverer who found out that it was not necessary to burn down a house every time that exquisite luxury was to be enjoyed. I confess I envy the fame of that transcendent genius. I should be proud if I could persuade my countrymen, and the English-speaking peoples at large, that it is not necessary to conjure up this wondrous apparatus of J's and E's and D's, of P's, P₁'s . . . P_x's, of redactors, of patchwork and framework, and all the rest of it, to set Jeremiah right in his facts, and gently to correct Ezekiel in his view of Israelite history, in order that we may enjoy the luxury of believing that every single incident recorded in the Old Testament did not occur precisely and literally as narrated, that documents were used by Israelite historians, as well as by those of every other country of which we have ever heard, or that it is probable that some later precepts may have in time become embodied in Moses' law as it now stands. The notion, which appears at present to be current in certain quarters, that we may criticise Hebrew historians as freely as we like, may contradict them as flatly as possible whenever it suits us, may call them any names we please, but that it were blasphemy to be abhorred of all faithful Christians to apply to a Driver or a Cheyne, a Kuenen or a Wellhausen, language of the kind the latter does not scruple to use in reference to the Books of Samuel or Chronicles—this notion is, to say the least, a remarkable one, and one, we may believe, not likely to be very long or very widely entertained.

¹ Attempts, it is true, have been made to recast Roman history and Greek literature on the principles described in the text; but they have not met with general acceptance.

I may go further. I may ask, What has been gained, from a historical standpoint, by adopting these theories? Do we know any more about Hebrew history? Do we "plant our foot" more firmly on the "realities" which underlie it?¹ Do we not, on the contrary, find that all we know now is that we know little, if anything, about it? We have dissected our materials into fragments, and we do not know how to use the fragments when we have got them. Then we must take exception to the use of the word "proved" by critics of the German school. Their so-called demonstrations have nothing of the nature of a "proof" about them, in the ordinarily accepted sense of the word. If they simply contented themselves with claiming that they had adduced reasons which made their conclusions possible, perhaps even worthy of consideration, deserving of examination, no one would be unreasonable enough to blame them. But to establish a probability is not, as some appear to suppose, to effect a demonstration. Then, again, very often the German critic relies very much on assertion, and very little on argument, even in establishing his probabilities. When Dr. Baxter handled Professor Wellhausen almost as roughly as the Professor has handled the Chronicler, there was not only much lifting up of hands in virtuous indignation at such an outburst of sheer profanity, but Dr. Baxter was pityingly told that he was a perfect *ignoramus* in the matter—that he had not studied the steps by which modern critics have arrived at their conclusions, and, above all, that he had never read "Wellhausen on the Composition of the Hexateuch," and that therefore his exposure of the fallacies of Wellhausen's reasoning elsewhere deserved no attention.

To this task, then, let us for a moment—though only for a moment—address ourselves. It need not detain us long. A sample will enable us to judge of the quality of the product in bulk.² As a specimen of Wellhausen's method of determining the component parts of the Hexateuch, let us take the following. In a discussion of the component parts of Gen. xlvii., xlviii., he tells us that in one place "J is unmistakable," that the "importance assigned to Judah" in chap. xlvii. 28 is a clear proof of J's writing, and that the

¹ Robertson Smith, "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," preface to first edition, p. xiii.

² I would not be understood to go so far as to say that *all* Wellhausen's criticism is as unsatisfactory as the specimen here given. But I have no hesitation in saying, and if called upon to do so, I will pledge myself to prove, that a considerable portion of it is so. A good deal of the credit now enjoyed by Wellhausen as a critic depends on the principle *omne ignotum pro magnifico*.

“modest request” for the land of Goshen in *xlvii. 6* stands in clear contrast with the generous promises recorded in *P* (*Gen. xlv. 20*).¹ Any person with even a very moderate knowledge of history will at once see what a splendid field of conjecture is opened to the historian if he is permitted to deal thus with his facts, and how large a part a vivid imagination may be expected to play in the historical discoveries of the future. If a potentate makes handsome promises to which it is thought unwise or inconvenient to hold him, we are entitled to see in the fact indubitable traces of composite authorship. If prominence is assigned to a certain character in any narrative, the narrator must of necessity be of the same nation or province as the person thus mentioned. Again, Kayser and Nöldeke sometimes take rather a different view of the division into sources from Wellhausen. They are each annihilated in a sentence.² And then there is the delicious passage, “*J* is unmistakable.” How delightful for a historical scholar first of all to be able to invent an authority of whose historical existence he has no proof whatever, and then to fix on a passage in an existing document and say that it is “unmistakably” by this entirely hypothetical hand! Let Mr. Hutton try this compendious method in his next edition of the history of the “Three Chapters,” and I can promise him that he will be able to prove Justinian to have been an Aphantodocete

¹ “Upon *xlvi. 5* follows in *JE xlvi. 28* ; *xlvii. 4* ; and *xlvii. 6b*. Here *J* is unmistakable, and as marks of distinction I would instance the ignorance of the particulars in *xlv. 17 et seq.*, the importance assigned to Judah, and in opposition to the generous promises of *xlv. 20*, the modest request for the land of Goshen” (“On the Composition of the Hexateuch,” p. 61). He does refer, however, to characteristic words such as *ישראל*, *הפעם*, *מנעוריני*, and *בעבור*. But a careful study of the original shows that even in the linguistic argument the theory is quite as likely to be responsible for the facts as the facts for the theory.

² Thus, if Kayser doubts Wellhausen's assertion that in *Exod. xvii. and xviii.* only one verse belongs to *P*, he “misses the expression, *כלערהבי*.” “The last part of the verse must under any circumstances be separated.” If Nöldeke thinks that *Exod. xvi.* belongs to *P*, with some small additions from other sources, he is told that “these additions are by no means so slight.” The additions are then enumerated, and the “demonstration” is complete. The additions are *1-3, 9-13a, 16b-18, 22-26, 31-34, 35a* (*Ibid.*, p. 80). Then there are “*Spüren der Brüchigkeit*” (p. 81) in chap. *xvii.* This he acknowledges “widerwillig.” He asks (p. 82) to what source *ישם* (*ver. 6*) belongs, and what relation there is between Mount Horeb and the hill at Rephidim. He goes on: “I know no answer to these questions.” The fact, then, that no satisfactory solution of difficulties can be found does not in the least prove that the theories of those who reject the history in consequence of them, must necessarily be sound. Does he, I wonder, “know an answer to the question” what other history can be produced made up of such an extraordinary array of scraps as the Pentateuch on his theory?

or a Nestorian, or a Monophysite, or anything else he pleases. And he will revel in his freedom from anything so cramping to a historian as the mere statements of his authorities.

The airy way in which Wellhausen disposes of the Ark, the Tabernacle, the sacrifices, the whole account of the sojourn of the Israelites in the wilderness, his fertility of imagination, his felicitous ridicule, his occasional outbursts of indignation, and his invariable infallibility, make him as delightful a companion as Dickens or De la Motte Fouqué, and fully account for his popularity. The only thing which is calculated, perhaps, to arouse a little surprise, is that anyone should be found to take him seriously. It is charming, no doubt, to read how "Abraham is a free creation of unconscious art," how "Nöldeke's assertion is quite off the mark," how "there is not a single word of truth" "in a passage in Samuel which conflicts with his theory of the origin of the priests and Levites, while his racy banter of the Chronicler for his exaggeration, his Chauvinism, and a host of other failings beside, is, of course, as much beyond all praise as it is universally felt to be appropriate to the subject. But we need not dwell further on Wellhausen. Thanks to Dr. Baxter's exposure of his reckless logic, he is becoming rather a broken idol, and it may be that in the end the fate of Dagon is reserved for him.¹ But we will just make a remark or two on Kuenen's mode of treating a historical question. Kuenen, like Professor Robertson Smith, has some conception of the nature of an argument, and has, therefore, some claim to serious treatment. Instead of dismissing a question of importance in a line or two, he has the candour to admit that "the mutual relation of J and E is one of the most vexed questions of the criticism of the Pentateuch."² He admits that, in the case of a considerable part of the Pentateuch, "the theatre was the desert; Israel is encamped there; the settlement in Canaan is in the future. The authors, so far from contemplating the settlement of the people in a more or less hazy future, constantly assume it as actual."³ But he thinks that this is "merely the literary form of presentment." It is obvious that here the probabilities are against him; therefore very cogent arguments should be adduced to support his position.

¹ Dr. Baxter, be it observed, does not attempt to disprove Wellhausen's theory of the sources of the Pentateuch, as we now have it. He confines himself to exposing his opponent's general recklessness of statement, from which he draws the conclusion that Wellhausen is not by any means a guide to be followed implicitly.

² "Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin and Composition of the Pentateuch," p. 64.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Yet it is remarkable how very slight is his treatment of so important a question. It is dismissed in some twenty lines. In the usual "hunt-the-slipper" fashion of the German school of critics, when it suits them, you are referred to Knobel, "Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua," 515 *sqq.*, 527, 585. As when Knobel's conclusions are *not* approved—Knobel's analysis of the Pentateuch differs widely from that at present in vogue—they are summarily dismissed, it may be perhaps remarked that this habit of sending us to obsolete authorities for proofs of important statements is both inconvenient and, in scientific inquiries, to say the least, unusual. The argument, again, from the difference in style between Deuteronomy and the earlier books is of no weight whatever, unless it is admitted—which it certainly is not—that a legal opinion by Brougham or Scarlett would present the same literary features as their brilliant forensic displays.¹ Then, we are told that, as the laws in Exodus to Numbers "are themselves intended for a settled people cultivating the soil," they would need no repetition or "modification in view of the impending passage of the Jordan."² This is, of course, a pure assumption. If we are to dismiss historical facts on *a priori* grounds such as these, we might just as easily get rid of a good deal of the contemporary history of the British Parliament or the American Congress. In addition to these, we are asked to observe the divergent statements of Exod. xx. 24, Deut. xii., and Lev. xvii.; of Exod. xxiii. 14-17, Deut. xvi. 19, Lev. xxiii., Deut. xv. 19-23, xiv. 22-27, xii. 6, Lev. xxvii. 26, 27, Num. xviii. 15-18. And this, with the stock objection concerning the tithe, is about all he has to say.³

Such are the grounds on which we are asked to rewrite the whole Hebrew history, including the repeated declarations of the prophets—to believe that the annals of Israel were falsified, and that the great Israelite preachers of righteousness were ignorant of the history of their own country. It is necessary

¹ It is not, observe, asserted that Deuteronomy and the other books of the Pentateuch are by the same author. All that is argued is that the arguments adduced to prove that they are not are utterly inadequate. Wellhausen himself admits that difference of subject must necessarily produce difference of style.

² "Historico-Critical Inquiry into the Origin and Composition of the Pentateuch," p. 24.

³ Professor Driver, in his *Introduction*, does little more than repeat these assertions. But when he adds that the fundamental institutions of P are unknown to Deuteronomy, he omits to state that the separation of P from the rest of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers is effected on the very hypothesis which he seeks to establish. Thus he hangs in air, as Wellhausen on one occasion has cleverly put it, like "a man suspended by his own waistband."

to repeat that the existence of discrepancies and inaccuracies is not denied. What is denied is that the correct explanation of them is given by the German school of criticism. We have no right to draw conclusions so large from premises infinitesimally small. No one wishes to deny that additions may possibly have been made in later times to the Mosaic institutions; no one insists any longer that the law of tithe laid down in Deuteronomy cannot have been subsequently modified. What we contend is, that a few discrepancies like these, backed up by a few arguments *ex silentio*, and a few suggestions of improbabilities, do not afford a sufficient foundation for the sweeping conclusions which have been drawn from them as to Deuteronomic and post-exilic falsifications—I regret the word, but no other will express the truth—of the facts, in the interests of a religious party.

P.S.—In a postscript to my paper of January, 1898, on “The Authorship of the Pentateuch,” I find my frequently treacherous memory has betrayed me into a slip. I inadvertently substituted JE for P as the author of whom the phrase “Paddan-Aram” is characteristic. The mistake only slightly affects the argument. JE, of course, could not possibly have had access to the cuneiform inscriptions, and could not, therefore, have used them in his narrative, as it is suggested the post-exilic writers did. P, on the contrary, might possibly have studied them; but it would be a strange anachronism, supposing him to have done so, to credit him with displaying the rare insight and scrupulous accuracy in dealing with his authorities which is sometimes, though not by any means invariably, found in a modern scholar, with the fear of the critics before him.

J. J. LIAS.



ART. II.—A ROMAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY IN IRELAND.

THERE is nothing more surprising, and therefore more worthy of consideration by the historical and ecclesiastical student, than the reaction in favour of Romanism, or the counter-Reformation, as it has been called, in Germany as well as in the Latin nations, at the end of the sixteenth century. The chief agent in the work was the Society of Jesus. And what were the means which these clever workers selected for carrying out their purpose—a purpose which they did carry out so successfully and effectually? Those who desire to